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Sweden's Red Spy Case Imperils Neutrality

By Brack Curry

STOCKHOLM (AP) — The opposition parties with sensational spy case involving Col. Stig Erik Wennerstrom has ballooned to proportions which could topple Europe's oldest Socialist government and bring on a reappraisal of Sweden's traditional neutrality.

Prime Minister Tage Erlander's government — in power since 1946 — is under stinging attack throughout the nation following disclosures that airman-diplomat Wennerstrom confessed having spied for the Russians for 15 years before he was detected.

Opposition parties have formed a united front in the assault on Erlander. Many of the nation's newspapers have unleashed the bitterest attacks against him since he took office.

The public has been so jolted by the scandal that the anger and resentment is almost universal in this nation. Usually reserved people are full of the reaction which shocked the government.

A leading businessman has quit four of the positions he held.

Everywhere was talking about the affair. The reaction was unusually strong and no doubt Wennerstrom has become the most hated man in modern times in Sweden.

The Colonel lived lavishly and gaped heavily, with only a \$10,000 income. One hears over and over such comments as "Wennerstrom gave away Sweden" and "how could a Swede do this to his own people?"

To many Swedes, the Wennerstrom case involved a long series of blunders. And this widespread attitude poses a grave threat to continued Socialist rule.

Erlander acted swiftly when the Wennerstrom bomb exploded last March. He appointed a panel of jurists to investigate the scandal. The

strong public support — demanded a parliamentary commission of all parties. Erlander refused.

Predictions by newspapers that taxes will be substantially increased to pay for redeployment of defense units and military installations further ired the public.

Erlander faces a general election next year. Until the Wennerstrom case broke, he was considered a shoo-in for another four-year term. Now he is on the defensive and there may well be further damaging revelations coming.

The opposition parties believe this scandal will give them their golden opportunity to defeat Erlander next year. In previous elections they have failed to present a united front against the Socialists, but they are united on the Wennerstrom affair and may win the election campaign as a result. They need to pick up only a few seats in the new Parliament to top Erlander and form a government.

Would a non-Socialist government move or abandon Sweden's centuries-old policy of neutrality? There is more public sentiment for this than ever before in modern times as a result of the deep bitterness toward the Russians because of Wennerstrom.

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